# The rise of agentic AI in healthcare: A solution to workforce challenges?



Healthcare is witnessing a transformative shift as the discussion surrounding the integration of agentic artificial intelligence (AI) gathers momentum. This new generation of AI technology, which exhibits greater autonomy and reasoning capabilities, is beginning to capture the interest of healthcare professionals and companies alike, particularly in light of the ongoing workforce shortages and increasing clinician burnout.

AI agents differ significantly from traditional generative AI, which responds only when prompted by specific tasks. Agentic AI, as described by Aashima Gupta, global director of healthcare strategy and solutions for Google Cloud, represents "an agent, your personal collaborator," which undertakes a variety of complex tasks without needing direct instruction. At the HIMSS25 Global Health Conference and Exhibition, held in March, Epic, a major player in electronic health records, announced plans to develop AI agents designed to assist patients in preparing for medical appointments. These agents will be capable of independently performing tasks such as identifying necessary tests and scheduling them, moving beyond the limitations of simpler AI setups like chatbots.

Mika Newton, CEO of data platform xCures, provided a practical analogy, suggesting that agentic AI has the potential to simulate a personnel role within healthcare settings. His company employs this advanced AI to streamline processes by extracting relevant information from medical records and populating healthcare forms, mimicking the functions one would expect from a human staff member.

The versatility of agentic AI extends to surgical procedures, highlighted by Don Woodlock, head of global healthcare solutions at InterSystems. He indicated that AI could manage pre-surgical operations: "You can just tell an [AI] agent: ‘Hey, get this patient ready for surgery. Here’s the kind of surgery. You go handle the rest.’" This capability could be particularly beneficial in alleviating some of the pressures facing practitioners in an industry projected to experience severe workforce shortages in the coming years, including an anticipated deficit of over 300,000 licensed practical nurses by 2037.

Furthermore, the introduction of agentic AI may help mitigate clinician burnout, a serious issue that has been recognised in recent surveys, such as one conducted by the American Medical Association, which reported that nearly half of surveyed physicians experienced symptoms of burnout in 2023.

Despite the promising outlook for agentic AI in healthcare, concerns have been raised regarding its implementation. Safety and the integrity of the AI's outputs are questions of paramount importance. Newton highlighted the need to ensure accountability, especially in light of the risk of AI "hallucinations," where the technology produces inaccurate information. Addressing these concerns, Gupta noted that developers are implementing guardrails that allow AI to cite its sources, thus enabling healthcare professionals to verify the information provided.

Moreover, there are apprehensions that reliance on agentic AI may lessen the human element in healthcare. The World Economic Forum has cautioned against fully removing humans from the decision-making process, advocating for established ethical guidelines and oversight in the use of AI.

In summary, the potential of agentic AI to revolutionise healthcare practices is significant, offering innovative solutions to pressing workforce challenges and enhancing operational efficiency. However, the successful integration of this technology will hinge on striking a balance between automation and human oversight, ensuring that the core values of healthcare, such as empathy and judgement, remain intact.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://automationedge.com/home-health-care-automation/blogs/what-is-agentic-ai-in-healthcare-and-its-role-in-improving-care-delivery/> - This URL supports the claim that Agentic AI in healthcare enhances decision-making, data collection, and analysis, leading to improved patient outcomes and operational efficiency.
* <https://www.mindsprint.com/insights/articles/agentic-ai-transforming-healthcare-through-autonomous-technology.html> - This article highlights Agentic AI's transformative potential in healthcare by providing autonomous solutions for diagnostics, personalized treatment plans, and operational efficiency.
* <https://66degrees.com/how-agentic-ai-is-transforming-the-healthcare-industry/> - This URL corroborates the benefits of Agentic AI in enhancing diagnostic accuracy, streamlining administrative processes, and accelerating drug discovery in healthcare.
* <https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/ama-survey-shows-nearly-half-us-physicians-experiencing-burnout> - This URL supports the claim about clinician burnout, which Agentic AI aims to mitigate by reducing workload and improving operational efficiency.
* <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/archive/artificial-intelligence/> - This URL from the World Economic Forum highlights the importance of ethical guidelines and oversight in AI implementation to maintain human values in healthcare.